How to create advertising that sells

by David Ogilvy

Ogilvy & Mather has been named "best advertising agency in the world" by The American Institute of Advertising. It has also been named "most creative agency" by Advertising Age and "most innovative agency" by Advertising Times.

We have been unable to establish any correlation between awards and sales. At Ogilvy & Mather we now give an annual award for the campaign which contributes the most to sales.

Successful advertising sells the product without drawing attention to itself. It rivets the consumer's attention on the product.

A good advertisement is not a product for dry skin or a product which gets hands dirty. It sells itself.

The result is a campaign that depends less on how we write the advertising than on how you write the product. Positioning is the key.

Research helps. Look before you leap.

2. Large promises. The second most important decision is this: what should you promise the customer? A promise is not a lie, a threat, or a slogan. It is a benefit to the customer.

It pays to promise benefits which are unique and competitive. And the product must deliver the benefit you promise.

Most advertising promises nothing. It is doomed to fail in the marketplace.

Promises, large or small, are the soul of an advertisement—Stuart Samuelson.

3. Brand image. Every advertisement should contribute to the brand image. An advertisement is a marketing tool. Every word creates a picture of the product in the customer's mind.

The manufacturer who dedicates his advertising to building a strong, sharply defined personality for his brand wins the greatest share of the market.

4. Big ideas. Unless your advertising is built on a real idea, it will pass like a ship in the night.

One of the greatest ideas in advertising is the "Talking Body." It is a group of advertisements that tells a story. It is an emotional appeal. It is a call to action.

Big ideas work. They work because they are

What works best in television

12. Testimonials. Avoid irrelevant celebrities. Testimonials are often the most successful form of advertising. They must be consistent with your product or your customers. The celebrity must be believable. The celebrity must be believable. The celebrity must be believable.

25. Headlines. On average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy.

It follows, then, that if you don't sell the product in your headline, you are wasting your money. That is why most Ogilvy & Mather headlines include the brand name and the promise.

26. Benefits in headlines. Headlines that promise a benefit sell more than those that don't.

27. News in headlines. Time after time, we have found that it pays to inject genuine news into headlines.

The consumer buys on the look out for new products, or new improvements in old products, or new ways to use an old product.

Economies—every Russian economist approves of this. They call it "informative" advertising. So do consumers.

28. Simple headlines. Your headline should telegraph what you want to say—no simple language. Readers do not stop to decipher the meaning of obscure headlines.

29. How many words in a headline? In head- line tests conducted with the cooperation of a big department store, it was found that headlines of ten words or longer sold more goods than shorter headlines.

In terms of recall, headlines between eight and ten words are most effective.

In mail-order advertising, headlines between six and twelve words got the most response.

On the average, long headlines sell more merchandise than short ones. Headlines like our

At 60 miles an hour, the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock.

30. Localism in advertising. In local advertising, it pays to include the name of the city in your headline.

31. Select your prospects. When you advertise a product which is consumed by a special group, it pays to "tag" that group in your headline—MOTHERS, HIM-SELF, EVERYONE TO GO EVERYWHERE.

32. Yes, people read copy. Readership falls off rapidly up to fifty words, but drops very little between fifty and five hundred words. (This page contains 599 words, and you are reading it.)

Ogilvy & Mather has used long copy—with notable success—this year, for Mercedes-Benz, General Citations, Mase Foods, and Shell gasoline.

"The more you tell, the more you sell!"

33. Story appeal in picture. Ogilvy & Mather has found that photographs which suggest a story to the reader increase sales.

34. Photographs vs. artwork. Ogilvy & Mather has found that photographs work better than drawings—almost invariably.

They attract more readers. They create more appeal to the consumer. They increase the sales of the product.

35. Use captions to sell. On the average, twice as many people read the captions under photographs as read the body copy.

It follows that you should never use a photograph without putting a caption under it. Each caption should be a mini-advertisement for the product-complete with brand name and promise.

36. Editorial layouts. Ogilvy & Mather has had more success with editorial layouts than with "colorful" layouts—almost invariably.

Editorial layouts get higher readership than conventional advertisements.

37. Repeat your winners. Scores of great advertising ideas have been discarded before they have begun to pay off.

Readership can actually increase with repetition—up to five repetitions.

Is this all we know?

These findings apply to most categories of products. But not to all.

Ogilvy & Mather has developed a specialized body of knowledge on what works for success in advertising food products, travel destinations, proprietary medicines, children's products—and other classifications.

But this special information is revealed only to the clients of Ogilvy & Mather.